

***SCLEROCONA ACUTELLUS* (EVERSMANN)
(LEPIDOPTERA: PYRALIDAE), THE SECOND
BRITISH RECORD**

P. J. BAKER

Mount Vale, The Drive, Virginia Water, Surrey GU25 4BP.

On the 13.vi.1989 I took from the garden light trap a pyralid which I did not recognise. Due to the pressure of work this was set aside and no attempt to identify it was made until late 1992. Early in 1993 the insect was finally identified as the second recorded specimen in Britain of *Sclerocona acutellus* (Eversmann).

Retzlaff and Wittland (1986) suggest that the larval pabulum is *Phragmites*, a plant which is quite common around the edges of gravel workings and ornamental lakes and along some stream sides within a 5-km radius of my garden in Thorpe/Virginia Water. No significant area of marshland including *Phragmites* communities is known from this area. Goater (1990) suggests a possible association of *S. acutellus* with low-lying damp sandy areas which dry out in summer. These areas include scrub and more open patches with species of *Carex*, *Scirpus*, grasses and a variety of herbaceous plants with *Phragmites* mainly along ditches. Such a habitat existed along the verges of the Thorpe bypass for several years after it was constructed in the early 1970s until the late 1980s when intensive cleaning up by the local council reduced the area to a characterless green roadside verge.

This year, 1993, an extensive search of *Phragmites* occurring within some 3 km of my garden was conducted and large samples of dead stems from the previous year as well as new growth were collected. A range of Lepidoptera associated with the reed was obtained but included no examples of *S. acutella*. More searches will be made in 1994 especially among the many *Phragmites* communities which will be destroyed when the local M25 is widened to fourteen lanes.

The possibility of some connection between this specimen and the first capture of this insect by Sterling (1989) less than a year earlier has to be considered. The Thorpe example could have been an accidental importation via the adjacent M25/M3 and Longstock is not that remote from an arterial road. Lack of other records seems to rule out migration but more examples need to be recorded before an informed conclusion can be suggested.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My thanks are due to Mr M. Schaffer of the Natural History Museum for his assistance with the identification of this insect and to Mr B. F. Skinner who very kindly provided details of recent relevant publications.

REFERENCES

- Goater, B. 1990. *Sclerocona acutellus* (Eversmann) (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae) in the South of France. *Entomologist's Gaz.* 41: 4.
- Retzlaff, H. & Wittland, W. 1986. The overwintering larva of *Sclerocona acutella* (Eversmann, 1842) from the Ebro-Delta (Spain) (Lep. Pyralidae, Pyraustinae). *Mitteilungen*, Band 3 (Nr. 36).
- Sterling, D. H. 1989. *Sclerocona acutellus* (Eversmann) (Lepidoptera: Pyralidae) new to Britain. *Entomologist's Gaz.* 40: 1-3.